

# Columbia Missourian

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Good Morning! It's Tuesday, March 17, 1981

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## Leon Hannah

From union organizer to church minister: at 92 he's seen a lot

By Kathy Morrall  
Missourian staff writer

When Leon Hannah left home in Conway, Miss., he was 17 years old. His mother sent him away because she didn't want him to grow up in the South, where his temperament might get him into trouble. He was proud and opinionated. That was dangerous 75 years ago in Mississippi for a man of African and American Indian blood.

As he walked down the dusty road, he entered a life in which he would:

- Train immigrant workers to work for Ford Motor Co. after World War I so successfully that, when he returned to visit his son in Detroit 59 years later, he was chauffeured in a company limousine.

- Organize an independent steel workers union in St. Louis in 1935 that served as a model for other organizers.

- Become minister of a church in Fayette in 1960, at the age of 71, and raise \$90,000 to build a church for his congregation.

- Enter college at age 79 and graduate in 1971 with a bachelor's degree in literature and theology.

Along the way, he has overcome racial prejudice, personal tragedy and sicknesses, including cancer, tuberculosis, black lung and a stroke.

Today, three decades after the traditional retirement age, Hannah is still preaching.

"God called me to a lifetime job — to preach and teach the gospel," he says. "I can't quit. God doesn't call a preacher to retire."

"There have been times when I've been afraid. When the doctor gave me no certainty about cancer, I didn't know what was going to happen."

"I went through so much. Faith in God, that's what pulled me through. Thy faith has made thee whole."

Two canes lay beside the Rev. Hannah's chair. Their curved handles are worn smooth from use. They support a man who has given strength and support to others for the past 82 years.

"I've walked and lived with man through the years," he says. "I know all about all of us. I know who we are."

The times Hannah has lived through have not been simple or care-free. His life is like the pages of a history book.

"People say to me I'm the same today as I was years ago. My life is one story. I love to go back and reiterate."

"From the time I was 12 until the time I was 17, I worked as an independent farm teamster in Mississippi, earning my living driving oxen up and down country roads. My grandmother was a half breed. I grew up among the Choctaw Indians until I was 17."

"I love America. It's my home. All those who don't should get out and go some place they love to be."

Calling himself an African American, he insists he's neither a black nor a Negro. He despises those words. To him, there are no shades. Everyone has a color. More importantly, everyone has a name, and that is what should distinguish one man from another, he says.

"I am a descendant from people in Ethiopia. I'm an American citizen, natural-born. I have my identity. My great-grandmother has her roots in Africa, but not my parents, and not myself. I'm a Christian, and that's what I want to be called."

When Hannah left Conway, he headed north for (See THE SEARCH, Page 8A)



The Rev. Leon Hannah explains a Bible passage to his grandson, Bruce

Fleming, top, and shares a laugh after a sermon, above.

Colleen Combes

## Council rejects panel's requests to close meeting

By Greg Rassa, Steven Thorpe and Mike Sante  
Missourian staff writers

The sun will continue to shine on Columbia Human Rights Commission deliberations, the City Council decided Monday.

The commission asked permission to close its deliberations to the public, but the council agreed unanimously to turn it down.

The proposal, an amendment to a city ordinance, was drafted by City Counselor Scott Snyder on behalf of the commission. The change would have allowed closed meetings only during commission deliberations, when the panel ruled on discrimination cases.

The commission is responsible for hearing complaints of race, sex, age, creed or religious discrimination when probable cause has been determined and when criminal prosecution has been foregone by the person filing the complaint.

Currently, public bodies in Columbia can meet behind closed doors only when meetings involve litigation, the lease, purchasing or sale of real estate, or hiring and firing personnel.

Commission Chairman John Berube said panel members would be able to more openly discuss the veracity of testimony if they were allowed to meet in closed session.

"What we ask is not unusual in the state of Missouri, in particular in Springfield and St. Louis, where they have closed deliberations, as does the state Human Rights Commission," Berube said.

Berube said the commission functions as a "quasi-judicial" body and, as such, serves as investigator,

judge and jury in discrimination cases. Commission members who investigate particular cases do not participate in deliberations.

Berube said that, like a civil or criminal jury, the commission should not be asked to deliberate in public. Under the defeated amendment, only deliberations would have been closed, and commission meetings, presentation of testimony and evidence and voting would have remained public.

Opposing the commission proposal, Rod Gelatt, professor at the University School of Journalism, told the council he felt the proposed amendment fell in "a very gray area" in the state's Open Meetings or Sunshine Law.

"I think an argument could be made that, because the Human Rights Commission is a public body, because the matters it deals with are public matters, and because the decisions it reaches and the policies it recommends are decisions and policies that effect all of us, that its discussions and deliberations should be carried on in public," Gelatt said.

Sixth Ward Councilman Lew Stoerker said he has always supported open meetings and that he believes in the public's right to know. Mayor Clyde Wilson said he had followed the activities of the commission and noted there was not unanimous agreement among commission members on requesting the closed meetings.

In other business, the council tabled until its next meeting a resolution establishing a commission to realign the city's wards. The realignment resolution, proposed by Wilson, would redraw ward lines to reflect 1980 census

(See COUNCIL, Page 8A)

## Council will appeal Oakland Gravel ruling

By Jim Lynch  
Missourian staff writer

The City Council decided in closed session Monday to appeal last week's Boone County Circuit Court ruling that residents along Oakland Gravel Road do not have to pay for street improvements.

Judge Frank Conley ruled Wednesday that residents along the road did not have to foot any of the bill for improvements to the street. The city had contended the residents should be billed for the equivalent of a residential street.

City Counselor Scott Snyder late Monday confirmed the council's decision to appeal the case, saying "yes, it will be appealed, but it's a complicated situation." The city's attorney in the case, Ray Lewis, also confirmed the decision.

Earlier Monday Lewis said he would ask the council to appeal Conley's ruling "out of fairness to the citizens of Columbia." Since others have had to pay the cost of road improvement in their areas, Oakland Gravel Road's residents should also, he said.

"To single out a handful of people on Oakland Road and allow them to have a free street at the expense of the rest of the citizens who have already paid for their own streets certainly raises questions of fundamental fairness," Lewis said. "I believe it is imperative to have this matter finally determined in our appellate courts."

In last Wednesday's ruling, Conley said the city could not bill homeowners along the road because the area was not improved by the road's upgrading. He said the entire city benefited from widening the road.

The city argued the court had no right to rule on the case and that the area residents benefitted substantially from the improvements. Conley rejected both arguments. The city has until March 25 to appeal the decision.

The city's appeal won't surprise Harvey McCaleb of the Oakland Road Association, who said last week he expects such a development. McCaleb will owe \$25,000 if the city eventually wins an appeal.

"It doesn't cost them anything," he said. "It's your money and my money they're spending."

## Danforth warns Soviets on prowl

By Ken Weiss  
Missourian staff writer

Although stopping short of predicting direct U.S. combat in El Salvador, Republican Sen. John Danforth warned Monday of "cancer-like Soviet expansionism" into the Western Hemisphere and voiced support for aid to that nation's government being furnished by President Reagan's administration.

In comments to about 60 gathered at a Columbia luncheon, Danforth accused the Soviets and Cubans of trying to spread "a bankrupt political ideology, Marxism" into "our hemisphere."

But, he said, "I don't think the U.S. will get involved in real combat in El Salvador." Congress isn't ready to pass another Gulf of Tonkin resolution, he added. That measure gave the late President Lyndon Johnson wide latitude in ordering military action against North Vietnam in the mid-1960s.

Danforth said he supports Reagan's policy of "military aid, advisers and training" to El Salvador's President Jose Napoleon Duarte. Questioned about where the aid line should be drawn, Danforth repeated he didn't foresee U.S. combat involvement and added, "We won't tolerate the Soviets fishing in our hemisphere."

Danforth said El Salvador and Vietnam aren't comparable. He cited El Salvador's location in the Western Hemisphere, its small size and the fact it isn't a divided nation as points of dissimilarity.

Focusing on American strategy in the Western Hemisphere, Danforth referred several times to 1823's Monroe

Doctrine, in which the United States warned against foreign incursions in this hemisphere. He said the United States would have to watch developments in the El Salvador situation, which he described as "a matter of a few thousand guerrillas equipped by Cuba and the Soviets," if the "Monroe Doctrine is to mean anything."

Other issues addressed by Danforth included:

- The state of the economy and Reagan's proposed tax cuts. "It is a matter of absolute necessity to begin rebuilding the economy," Danforth said. He said the proposed tax cut is a positive step toward expanding the economy.

While noting the tax cuts aren't finalized, Danforth predicted an across-the-board cut for individual taxpayers. "I think we'll see less than the proposed cut of 10 percent a year for three years," he said. For business, he predicted a plan of "simplified depreciation" to stimulate investment.

- Funding for higher education. Danforth said Reagan would eventually push for tuition tax credits and acknowledged that, if deep cuts are made in the guaranteed student loan program, the "only ones who could afford college would be the rich or the poor."

- The Soviet grain embargo. Danforth said that, while he opposes continuing the embargo, he understands Reagan's thinking. "He wants to show the Soviets we take them seriously," he said. In the wake of developments in Poland and elsewhere, "he's convinced this isn't the time to lift the embargo."

- The proposed dam on the Meramec River, which has been touted as a potential wilderness area. Danforth said "there is general agreement that the dam won't be built." An opponent of the dam, Danforth said the process is underway for working out a permanent plan for the river.



Danforth

## After-school classes a local alternative to day care

By Lillian Kuras  
Missourian staff writer

More than 10 years ago, when Liz Schmidt and other members of the Columbia PTA urged the school board to consider after-school classes for children, as an alternative to day care for working mothers, the idea appeared to fall on deaf ears.

Since then, economic and societal changes seem to have increased this need in Columbia, as well as in many other communities across the nation.

Last Monday, the Columbia School Board voted unanimously to study the feasibility of a community education program that would extend the school day for children from kindergarten through sixth grade. The children's parents would pay for the service.

The proposal presented to the board called for a voluntary program that charged enough fees to be self-supporting.

In 1972, the Bureau of the Census said 38 percent of the total U.S. work force was female. Last year, the figure had jumped to 42.4 percent, and population experts expect the figure to continue rising.

An inflationary economy and interest in careers has stirred an increasing number of mothers to seek full-time employment. For parents with school-age children, that often means the children will return from school to an empty house, because both parents are still at work.

Census officials estimate that there were 2 million "latch key" children in the United States last year. The name was linked to the habit in some areas, including Missouri, of put-

### Insight

ting a key around the neck of young children so they can open the door before the parents get home.

After the board's decision to study proposals, Mrs. Schmidt, president of the Columbia PTA, said she and the PTA have advocated the establishment of such a program for more than 10 years. But, there are many aspects of the program which must be given careful consideration.

- What sort of teachers will be used? Some favor certified teachers while others feel the program should be tailored after adult education classes, for which teachers are screened, but do not need to be professionals.

- What discipline procedures are needed?
- What sort of security will be provided at the school, especially if the program extends into the evening hours?

- What sort of feeding arrangements will be made, if the schools are open during the dinner hour?

In response to what many consider a growing need, there have been several different proposals for financing. Some advocate a federally funded program. In view of President Reagan's recent budget cuts, however, the prospects seem to be dim.

Therefore, most advocates of after-school community education programs are talking in terms of financial self-sufficiency. That would require a fee structure to bring in the revenue needed to support the program.

To study some alternatives, Superintendent

Russell Thompson sent four Columbia public school officials to Salt Lake City earlier this month to review model community education programs.

The study group was impressed with the success of tuition-paid, after-school classes such as cheerleading, astronomy and drama that have been offered to school-aged children since 1969.

Members of the group were Jay Willows, Columbia Public Schools director of adult and vocational education; Gerri Shelton, coordinator of adult education day/evening classes; Owen Jackson, director of elementary education, and Martha Young, principal of Blue Ridge Elementary School.

They reported their positive feelings about the Salt Lake City program to the board at the last meeting, and recommended a similar program be established in Columbia.

### Inside today

Dow average rallies past the 1,000 mark

The Dow Jones Industrial average broke the 1,000 barrier after soaring 17.02 points Monday. See story, Page 8B.

### In town today

9:30 a.m. Meeting, Boone County Court, court chamber, fifth floor, County-City Building.

8:15 p.m. Faculty Recital Series, University's Fine Arts Recital Hall. Free.

3, 7:30 and 10 p.m. "Hearts and Minds," an award-winning movie about Vietnam. Middlebush Auditorium, University campus. Admission is 50 cents.